THE
RAMBLINGS
OF AN
ARTIST.

THE RAMBLINGS OF AN ARTIST

HELEN MABEL TREVOR 'AT HOME.'

[Frontispiece.

THE RAMBLINGS OF AN ARTIST

1853 - 1930

Selections from the Letters

of

H. M. TREVOR

To E. H.

Emmeline Halse Born in London, studied with her Father, at the Royal Academy School 1876 to early 1880s then trained in Paris und Frédéric Louise Désiré Bogino. One of Emmeline's close Friends was the painte Helen Trevor who travelled a and worked in France and Italy in the 1880's and 1890's

Born Loughborough Co-Dawr

GAY AND BIRD
22 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND
LONDON
1901

After Helens death Emmeline arranged for the publication of her correspondence thus

IN MEMORY OF MY DEAR FRIEND

HELEN MABEL TREVOR.

E. H.

'God must be glad one loves His world so much.
I can give news of earth to all the dead
Who ask me: last year's sunsets, and great stars
Which had a right to come first and see ebb
The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—

* * * * *

And that day
In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm—
May's warm slow yellow moonlit summer nights—
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!'

Pippa Passes.

In publishing the following letters, my wish has been that they should occupy a wider space than the pigeon-hole of my bureau; and, indeed, I think they merit it, in spite of their incompleteness, which is owing, of course, to the fact that they were never intended for publication. Still, I venture to hope that the charm of description and the individuality that stamps these letters may interest a few kindred spirits.

As they were often profusely illustrated by pen-and-ink sketches, or accompanied by photographs of works in progress, some are here reproduced.

E. HALSE.

London, 1900.

'My mind seems to be stamped over with impressions, as the back of a forwarded letter is with post-marks! I fear I shall never have leisure to separate and sift them into order.'

H. M. T.

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ITALY

PROCESSION AT ASSISI.

[To face p. 1.

Ramblings of an Artist

Assisi, Italy, 1886.

My dear E——,

I know that you will like to hear of our whereabouts, and how Rose* and I are faring in Italy, and a letter from this quiet, medieval retreat may be a relief to a Londoner like yourself.

There are no burning questions here. All is calm. Rumour comes to us cooled and softened down by distance. The very railway seems to respect the retirement of the place, and has its station so far away that the inevitable screech and whistle comes mellowed to a dreamy sound, a gentle hint, as it were, to the old feudal city

* Her unselfish and devoted sister.

that the world is advancing and moving on outside. But progress has not ventured within its wall. We are as we were in the year of grace 1283, when Master Pietro Bernardini returned from France to hear that a son was born to him (the little Francis). There are the same steep, narrow streets, with little pathways of brick down the centre, most of the same houses, restored and patched, the same occupations, distaff and spindle, as in those days. The tinkle of the smith's hammer keeps up a sort of accompaniment to the silence of the little town. Imagination may furnish a helmet or two to their shops, and suppose the musical ring of the anvil to be still heard off polished cuirass and breastplate.

The seemingly little town, which at a distance looks like a handful of gray macadamized stones dropped on the mountain-side, unfolds itself to you reservedly bit by bit, as if shy of strangers of this later age. When we first came, it seemed merely the quaintest of quaint little villages; the next day we discovered new quarters, and now we are surprised to find

many ancient palazzos, with worn-out armorial bearings and old frescoes.

The ancient Assisians, as well as the monks, seem to have had a lively appreciation of the magnificence of the view which surrounded them, for almost every house is furnished with a *loggia* or terrace, from which can be enjoyed the scenery without inconvenience from the sun. For though not covered overhead, they have been carefully placed where the shadow of the house falls at noon upon them ; any one of these *loggias* makes a delightful lounging-place or open-air studio, where you may get no end of fine effects. We asked liberty to sketch from one of these, and were at once admitted and chairs brought us, that we might make ourselves comfortable. By-and-by the proprietor himself, an old priest, in knee-breeches, black worsted stockings and shoe-buckles, came down and proved himself somewhat of a judge in art matters by criticising my sketch.

Most of the monks and priests look more or less dirty, and they indulge in a furtive pipe

whenever they can, even in Lent. From my window I see one of the tribe pottering with a watering-can among his lettuces and onions, in the bit of terraced garden below the great monastery. He looks like a little black steam-engine, with a puff of blue smoke breaking from time to time from under the broad brim of his beaver hat. Poor old soul! Why should it be thought a sin that he should warm his nose and quiet his spirit with a little tobacco? I dare say he eats a pretty good dinner too — that is to say, if a good dinner is procurable on the miserable pittance that Government allows him 'per diem' in lieu of the rich pastures and other possessions it has robbed him of.

The spirit of St. Francis seems still amongst them, however, and they hush their voices, as if aware of an invisible sacred presence. As for me, the saint moves beside me with cowled head and corded waist and sandalled foot wherever I go, with that sad, pensive face of his. What is it that gives that look of deep disappointment to it? And I wonder why he

spent those days in the wood round the Portiuncula, when men heard his groans? Had something that he alone was conscious of made him feel that he had failed to reach the saintly height which Popes and men had given him? Did he feel himself, after all, a failure, as most of us do?

I was sitting in that wood when I read your last letter, which was forwarded from Etaples. I did not like that poem you sent me, about the *masks* we wear; it made me cynical. As I was alone, and there was no one near me, I took off my own mask and turned it about between my fingers, and found—what do you think? Holes in it! Those salient bumps and rough edges which hurt you sometimes would wear out anything. When next I am captious you'll know it's a fray in the mask.

You want a description of our present home. Our inn nestles in a corner of the cloisters of the great Benedictine monastery of St. Francesco, dating from early in the thirteenth century. Giotto's famous frescoes are there.

Our great old-fashioned hall-door has a

knocker which probably St. Francis used long ago when asking alms.

We have a dear old woman for housekeeper and servant, who takes care of us as if we were her children, and will insist on waiting upon us, with such a natural grace as no lady could surpass. I have a fine large bedroom and an Italian family bed, made to contain five or six persons. I lose myself in it every night.

My window overlooks the Umbrian valley, which is spread out like a chequered shawl (alternate green and brown) with crop and fallow, fringed by purple hills, and towards the south a background of azure mountains streaked with snow. It is a glorious prospect, and just now it is perfect, the sunshine having just cloud enough to make its smiles picturesquely partial, at one moment bringing Perugia into bright light, as if to show it to us, then dropping it, and taking up Santa Maria, and again passing to Trevi, or some one of the pretty villages, farmhouses and mills with which the rich and beautiful valley of Umbria is thickly sprinkled.

From another window I get a peep into the

street where Pietro Bernardini had his shop near 800 years ago, and down which one day young Francis in mistaken zeal carried his father's bales of cloth secretly to Foligno, and sold them himself in the market-place there, and placed the ill-gotten money in the little monastery of St. Damiano.

When we arrived at this hotel we found four English ladies here, who for some reason seemed to be keeping up a strict silence between them. We broke in upon it. Two at once lighted up with looks of the deepest gratitude. The others held out longer—in right, I think, of a lady's-maid they had between them. We had no lady's-maid to sit upon us, so we could afford to be jolly. By-and-by one of these two last great people thawed; then the other, seeing that her friend was throwing away her dignity, became reckless also, and plunged into discourse right and left, and we were all interchanging ideas as if there were no such things as riches and servant-maids in the world. After this quartette came others, still ladies; it is all ladies! I believe the other sex is fast wearing

off the face of the earth, or has been 'merged' like Mr. Jellaby.

It is curious the way they 'do' these places. They arrive in the evening, rush to the coffee-room to feed, after that to the photographer's, to have something to swear by, then to bed, and off again in the morning. Mrs. Oliphant may supply the rest, and they will be able to say to their less fortunate neighbours that they have been to Assisi or elsewhere, as the case may be. I used to wonder long ago how very little people who travelled had to say about their impressions of places and people. I no longer wonder; I have been behind the scenes.

It begins to be very hot here. Every morning when the sun begins to take off his clouds and appear in undress, I apostrophize him in Italian, beginning 'Sole, sole!' etc., begging him not to burn me up, as he did last year. We have to dodge him. We rise at four o'clock every morning, before he has his chin over the ridge of Monte Subasio, and go about our business in the delicious, cool morning air;

and when he looks full face down at us, we come in, creeping cautiously along the shady side of the narrow streets, then take refuge in dressing-gowns and cool hall till dinner, which we, like the natives, always have at noon ; and after dinner we go to bed—actually into bed—to sleep and to dream. When we get up there are perhaps visits to pay, for we generally meet friends of friends wherever we go. People seem knitted together, and we come into their webs very often, like two stray beads, and get stitched in too. Then, at dusk, we go away for a walk, often along a beautiful mountain path to meet the herd of goats of Pasquali. The whole flock, with their regiment of horns and little tinkling bells, stop when we beg a glass of milk of one or two, and the little kids seize the opportunity to drop on their knees and help themselves diligently from their mothers, until —whip ! and up again, to resume the march homewards. The air at this hour is delicious and full of fireflies, like little cool sparks, winking about. Spirits they seem to be ; they flash out for a second and then vanish, then flash out

again. The children catch them, and stick them in their hair like diamonds.

My favourite walk is down the hill to St. Damiano. This is the smallest of small churches, and utterly without ornament, yet it is the most interesting of all the interesting spots about Assisi. The place is full of memories. It was here Francis began his religious life by rebuilding the broken walls of the little chapel. Here it was he hid the stolen money I spoke of. They show you the place where the wall opened miraculously to hide him from the paternal wrath, a neat little oblong hollow, where *more* likely a press may have stood (may the saints forgive me for saying so!). Here it was that the crucifix now in the Convent of Sainta Clara spoke to him. The legend has traversed 660 years, and looks rather strange to us; but that the Saviour did speak to the heart of Francis who can doubt? Here also is that other miraculous figure of our Saviour, said to have been finished by angel-hands. A Frate, long ago, carved the body, but dare not venture on the head;

CAPO D'AGLIO.

[To face p. 11.

but he rose one morning to find the head completed! It is beautiful and wonderful enough to make one almost believe the story. Many other relics are to be found here. Amongst them a small bell was shown us that called the ancient brotherhood to prayer. The monk sounded it while I held my breath ; a sound, not strong and confident, but thin and silvery, like the spirit of a bell, seemed to come to us across the ages, called back, as it were, from where its sound had gone.

ASSISI.

Since writing the above, we have been spending a few days in the ancient city of Perugia ; we found it very interesting, but too big for our taste.

Assisi was very pleased to see us again as we drove up in our carriage, drawn by two horses and one donkey, harnessed abreast—such is the style of Assisi. We were frequently stopped in our stately progress by kind inquiring friends ; even the fat, red-faced policeman came up to the carriage door to express

his satisfaction. It was the anniversary of Assisi's saint. The glorious old church was all ablaze with wax lights and colour from 'storied pane,' frescoes, and gorgeous vestments, and full of brethren of the Order, many of them young and handsome, notably those of San Damiano. Such beautiful, saint-like faces those young men have; the older monks take snuff and look disappointed. There was a splendid Requiem Mass last night; such beautiful singing! the men's voices, some of them, as tender and sweet as a woman's, others like a niagara of stormy harmony. It was altogether a magnificent thing. The monks spare no expense, and they are rich in their Church music; it is famed. As they sang, the light from above fell upon their faces, and cast deep shadows about their frocked figures. The scene was intensely pictorial.

All Assisi was in holiday clothes, six hundred odd years after the death of their saint—in memory of it! What a power of holiness must have been in the man! or was it something else? Was it a great strong, sympathetic

nature, made to govern and direct men, full of magnetic force which reaches and touches us still? Francis, methinks, in his brown dress, stands up between the dark ages and the light, the one figure we stop at as we run our thoughts over the past—at least, we Assisians! He still walks in the cool of the morning, and in the evening shade, at the hour when the houses of the little town send forth their blue breath. They stand mute all day, but begin to sigh and breathe at sunset, and then all the old churches (there are thirty in all) begin to talk to one another, and the air is full of the babble of bells. Just at that hour, when great piles of rose-coloured clouds reflect back the departing light of day, methinks the saint moves past, crossing himself and whispering 'Buona sera in Domini,' as do his descended children the monks when they meet you. 'Buona notte in Domini,' as said an old priest to us the other night, and added with a simplicity which made me laugh: 'I will tell "Il Signore" how good you are to the poor.' 'If you do,' I began, but laughter stopped my merry rejoinder. They

are too funny, these old monks, sometimes, and very sweet too.

We are more in love with this place than ever; I don't know how we are ever to tear ourselves away from it. For a time it is our home; we make our home for ourselves wherever we are, like that little green fly you wot of, which makes the little circles of white froth round itself, for itself, and I suppose calls it 'home'—poor little green fly!

There are so many little interests and duties round about us; so many poor old people and children coming for us to do something, or to look at what we are doing, that there is always a quiet stir, many octaves lower than the stir that is in the world, but yet life.

The other morning we rose, as usual, at four o'clock, while yet the sky was digesting its yesterday's clouds, and before the first swallow swept out in pursuit of its breakfast, and took our way towards the little lane where I have set up my easel. A woman rushed out of a cottage in great agitation, and, as the door was wide open, I walked in. There upon a poor

bed lay an old man in that last mysterious struggle of life called death. He looked very calm; it was the face of a saint—a Saint Jerome. His eyes were raised towards the broken roof, very quietly. A young man was ministering to him, while his tears dropped on to the pillows.

We tried to soothe the woman, who was in passionate grief, and at length got her into another room, and so restored the chamber of death to quiet. I was told afterwards that she was the *buona figlia*. It was pathetic to see her spreading out her arms, and crying, 'Che me fare—che me fare?'

We slipped out again into the beautiful fresh morning air with feelings I cannot define. Death seemed so out of place and out of season just then; but thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!

There is other cottage life with which we have got mixed up, and one poor old withered, bright-eyed Italian woman, sick and suffering, expects us to visit her *every* evening; and when we have been prevented going, she sends

salutations, and to say that she is not the better for our absence. I expect, as usual, when we leave we shall have some roots to pull up.

There is one great drawback to all Italian country life, and that is the almost utter absence of birds. The country is so silent. The Italians eat everything that has life, down or up to the titmouse. One day when I was ill our padrona sent me as a present a whole string of little goldfinches; I sent them back in horror. They were delicious, she said. How the nightingale manages to escape this omnivorous people I do not know, but he does—perhaps because he does not stay long enough. One of these sweet birds joined our picnic the other day, and discoursed most eloquent music during and after our repast somewhere over our heads among the leaves of a mulberry-tree. I took note of the performance then and there in my sketch-book for your benefit and my own. It is to this effect: that the nightingale's is not a song; it is a wandering variety of sweet notes and turns and shakes, very leisurely uttered

from a rich throat, muttering slowly to itself and stopping long between, as if recalling some sweet sounds once heard and half forgotten, like a performer who searches out an air with his fingers on the piano in the dark and does not care whether he finds it out or no, so that he gets harmony.

On Good Friday a quaint procession passed from the Duomo to the Church of St. Francesco and back to the Duomo again: cross-bearers in pilgrims' garb, with the traditional scallop-shell on cape and cap; priests chanting; torch-bearers with muffled faces; more crosses—great life-sized black crosses—so heavy that the men who carried them bent and staggered under the weight as they moved forward; monks praying; and then a great catafalque with a figure representing the dead Christ on it; then a swarm of chanting monks and country people filling the narrow steep street; and the town band, not a very bad one, brought up the rear. I dare say it reads funnily, but I assure you it struck me as very solemn and touching. I can imagine Francis's tears, all the old customs being just

the same as in his days. The whole scene—the crowds of faces lighted up by the torches in the dark streets—had a weird appearance We all hung out little lamps from our windows; it was the thing to do, so, of course, we did it; we had a *lucerna* with two flames.

To-day the priests go from house to house blessing the bread, and at 11.30, at the sound of the church bells, all the *contadini* ran to the fountains to wash their faces. It was a singular scene—a very old custom, I am told.

Every Saturday, from six to ten, a market is held in the Piazza Grande—the most picturesque scene you can imagine: donkeys laden with wood for firing; booths with cottons and hats and handkerchiefs, brooches, pins, and cheap jewellery for the *contadini*, who stand about in crowds, with perhaps a basket on one arm and a great scarlet fan in the other, which they know how to use more gracefully, I venture to say, than any lady in an English ballroom; even wee children carry their fans. There are vegetables of all sorts, fruits of every imaginable colour, and poor little kids, tied

by the heels, bleating, and looking half dead; turkeys and fowls, all humble-jumble together, spread out round the grand old fountain or under the great fluted columns of the ancient Temple of Minerva.

There is much more I might pipe unto you of all that is to be seen and found here, recalling what William Morris calls

> 'The gentle music of the bygone years,
> Long past to us, with all their hopes and fears';

but I must not weary you, so *addio*, *mia cara amica*.

H. M. T.

P.S.—The enclosed head is from a study I am making of one of my old friends, aged eighty-four. He is called *Capo d'aglio* ('Head of garlic'), from the peculiar contour of his head, which is as white as snow.

FLORENCE.

MY DEAR E——,

We were just leaving Assisi when your letter came. We wound up our stay there by giving a dinner-party to several of our cottage friends, the qualification being old age and poverty!

'A HARD TASK,' FLORENCE.

[To face p. 21.

We said good-bye also to all our favourite haunts, feeling that we were leaving the sweetest spot on earth. It was very hard parting with our poor old servant, Mariunccia; she cried very much, and wanted to come with us. We told her we should return, for indeed we must, in order to finish my large picture of the procession of men and choir-boys carrying candles. I wonder if you will like it. It is rather gorgeous; the capes are red, and it is painted out in the brilliant sunshine. It was very popular in Assisi, where they called it 'Capo lavoro,' I suppose chiefly because they recognised themselves in it. 'Ecco Filippo!' 'Ecco Carlo!' 'Ecco Gogo!' etc., were their exclamations.

The winter stopped my finishing it, and here we are in Florence. We spent a few days in Switzerland before settling down here. Oh, that wonderful drive through Switzerland, by Lucerne, and through the St. Gothard Pass, and Tell's country! I hope I shall never forget it. Beautiful Lake Maggiore and grand Lugano, with the dusky, snow-clad earth swept

up into mountains, to leave the floor of the lake clear.

It was dusk when I saw it, and lights were beginning to star the margin, but still there was light enough to cast vast shadows from the hills. The lake lay there like a beautiful human character—darkened by the shadows of earth, but reflecting the image of heaven.

When I shut my eyes at night I see great frowning cliffs, powdered with snow and streaked with white lines of cascades springing up into the sky; or awful mountains like lions in fairy stories, with little villages sprinkled on their sides, in colour like handfuls of purple mussel-shells. I think this is the greatest and most awfully beautiful thing I have ever seen, and it has left the most delightful thoughts in my mind; I take them out at night, and go to sleep with them. What would it be to live in such a country? Would it take all ambition out of one, or would it inspire one to great things? The few peasants that I saw in passing had a very noble, independent bearing, as if something of William Tell remained in them yet.

We stayed a night in Milan. You know the cathedral. She looked to me like a beautiful lady, in a white dress down to her feet, sitting in the light morning mist.

As we entered Florence a lady said to me: 'You go, my dear, to receive your *baptism* of art.' Well, the ceremony has not yet been performed; I have only seen the outside of things at present.

The grand old Duomo is discoursing, as she does at this hour every day, in sweet, sad, sonorous tones—*she* who once echoed to the electrifying voice of the Friar of St. Marco!

I was in his cell yesterday, and there found most of his books, and clothes, and crucifix, and the morsel of wood they have preserved from the pile with which they burnt his dead body and that of Fra Domenico, his true, loving, and heroic friend and follower. Of the two I believe I love Domenico most.

Over the door in the cloister there is a very old fresco-painting by Fra Angelico. It is the sweetest thing I ever saw; it represents our Saviour being received by two 'Frati'—

they who were wont to receive and shelter strangers.

I want to copy it, only the cloister is so draughty, I am afraid. I peeped through the bars of the door at the end, and saw the damask rose-bush by which Savonarola used to stand while delivering his addresses to his monks in the summer afternoons of 1490, and later. It had grown wild in the midst of a deserted garden. The whole monastery is deserted; all the cells empty, like chrysalides, and the butterflies flown! A tablet over the door of one shows which was that of the wonderful 'Hyronime Savonarola.'

Dante's great-grandson was in exile in the time of Savonarola, and Machiavelli was only a boy, and M. Angelo Buonarotti was getting his nose broken, and studying, all unknown to fame, in the gardens of the Medici, and elsewhere Christopher Columbus, the Savonarola of Spain, was unfurling his sails for an unknown world.

It was a wonderful time when those cells were peopled, and a master mind was there;

for certainly Savonarola was the first to lay his hand on the black veil which enveloped the world, and to let in some of the light of the dawn of a new era. I look upon him as the heroic pioneer of modern civilization, and I almost think that it is his memory, and not Luther's so much, which should receive our homage. Of the two, *his* was certainly the nobler character. The Renaissance began with him, and he dealt feudalism and tyranny its first blow. In fact, it appears to me that he was the first, since the time of the ancients, who dared to think for himself. In his days, if men were clever, they repeated and copied Plato and Aristotle ; if they wrote verse, it was an absurd copy of the heathen poets. He was the first who made it possible for Michael Angelo to be Michael Angelo !

And as far as I can see, Italian art of to-day needs another Michael Angelo to lead the way once more to truth. I never saw such a depressing collection of rubbish as that upstairs in the Della Bell' Arte to-day.

I entered the gallery depressed, but the

sweet religious Fra Angelicos and Peruginos, and Filippo Lippis soothed me; but when I mounted to the modern gallery I felt as if I should go home and fling my palette in the Arno, if that was all that could be done with it! Not one spark of originality, or truth, or even good taste! And then to see a set of dirty men and boys making, if possible, worse copies of them!

The genius of art seems to me content with what *has* been done in Italy, and has betaken herself to other lands, to work new wonders there.

I have commenced a small picture of a monk teaching some choir-boys to sing, but it is not clear to me that it will *marche*, as the French say. At present I have my canvas in the sacristy at Santa Croce. I have, with my usual taste, and to the great wonder of the monks there, chosen the poorest—the *only* poor—bit of the magnificent old chamber. I cannot make them understand how it just suits my picture.

There are very few of these black Fran-

ciscans, and they seem very idle—hanging about, looking on, while a woman works at the art once all theirs. One poor old fellow, like an old wounded crow with a trailing wing, hovers constantly about my easel. I was looking at some of the beautiful illuminated manuscripts in the cases, and asked him if the Frati did work like that now. Before the question was well spoken, I felt a little sorry I had asked it, as it might seem like a reproach; but old and bewildered as he seemed, he had his answer 'pat':

'No, signora; machinery does all that nowadays.'

'Yes,' thought I; 'and machinery is going to do away with you.' I meant the Government.

Of course it is all right that it should be so; but I can't help feeling regret that perhaps in another fifty years the picturesque figure will exist only—in my picture, for example! They go so well with their surroundings here.

We met two of the 'Frati' toiling up the steep of St. Miniato, to their convent on the

hill—one with a wallet across his shoulder (they had been down in the city begging). The elder one was very handsome and commanding-looking. He drew his cowl more over his face as he passed us, *feeling*, perhaps, my curious eyes, for neither of them looked up; the

younger one pushed back his brown hood, so that we could see the little under-cap and fringe of hair.

Behind them, as at the bottom of a basin, the beautiful Val d'Arno, with Florence and its domes and towers sparkling blue and white and soft cream colour and red in the light haze, and beautiful Fiesoli and the Apennines, for a more

immediate background, and the tall, straight, solemn yews about the monastery church, on either hand. It was a wonderful picture. And the sounds which came up to us there! Florence is always singing—her bells seldom cease, only just enough to hinder them from being monotonous, and to make them inexpressibly welcome. One tower talks to another, the Duomo leading off the gossip, as if they were asking each other how they fare in this shallow, restless nineteenth century; they talk over our heads, occupied only with themselves and their past.

To take away the poor Frati out of this country would be like taking away the old buildings. And why, pray, should not men feel still that they can walk closer with God apart from our world and its ways, as much as they did when St. Francis first put on the brown frock? For my part, I think our manners are as pernicious, and further, almost, from the truth than they were in these old times.

To-day we were eating our lunch on a sunny stone in the court of a monastery on the way to Certosa, preferring that to the icy refectory

where they offered to put us. An old monk peeped through a little square hole all the time at us, till I pointed out his eye to Rose, when he slipped away, I suppose ashamed. I gave him afterwards half a franc to heal the wound my laughing finger had made, to buy snuff; the poor old fellows are not allowed to smoke, and never eat anything but fish and vegetables, such is the strictness of their Order; nevertheless, they are quite fat, every one of them.

The walk home was lovely. Florence was quite hid from us, lying in the valley; and as we came upon it suddenly on the edge of the hill, we pretended to each other not to know what fair little city we had reached. It looked to me like the picture I have seen of Jerusalem, surrounded by its hills.

The old house we are living in must have once been a palace, the rooms are so enormously large; the owner, when recommending them, said:

'Behold, signora, you have a *thorough draught* at all times!'

'Pleasant,' thought I, 'with the thermometer

somewhere below zero!' as it felt to me. If he had introduced me to a well-heated oven, it would have been more to my liking at that moment. In any case, the room being about the size of the British Museum, we could dispense with draughts. Hoping to warm it, we ordered a stove as well as a fire; they brought a fine ornamental affair without bars (what *bar*-barians they are—they don't know what comfort is). When I desired another blanket on my bed, the padrona made big eyes at me, as if my extravagance knew no bounds.

I have also got a *scaldino*, but there is not fire enough in it to warm the point of your nose.

I work in the *loggia* at the top of the house, open east and south. Ice comes in one way, sunshine hot the other! but they never mix and become tepid; each retains its individual characteristic unmitigated.

There is, however, material in abundance for comfort, in the sweet pine-wood on the rocky steeps of the Apennines, redolent of fresh mountain air; and such a fire as it makes! A coal fire is prose, but a fire of wood is poetry!

They kindle it with little aromatic bundles of juniper-twigs, dried and tied together with bay-leaves, some of those left behind by Dante—delicious scented twigs. I have been like Bottom, 'smelling to' one of them before committing it to the flames.

Then the embers furnish such food for fancy. There are volumes of romance traced on their gray page, if only you have the secret of the character. Warm and snug in your arm-chair, you may trace stories of storm, amid the everlasting snows, and the fate of lost mountain-climbers by the great slow-moving glaciers; in short, there is nothing like an Italian wood-fire —such glamour hangs about it.

We had a dreadful storm one night—one of those sudden hurricanes common to this country. The rain poured and the lightning flashed. The Arno next day was rushing high, like an ocean of strong coffee with rich cream in it; it quite rivalled the Tiber in colour. We have a commanding view from our window over the Ponte San Trinita, and a good bit along the Lungarno; on either hand we can

watch the progress of the Arno until it glides under its Ponte Vecchio, and our bridge, St. Trinità. So that, sitting, reading, or working, we can see everything that goes on — the soldiers marching past, and the pretty English girls tripping along with their Baedekers under

their arms, and the flower-women, the contents of whose baskets contrast so strangely with the extreme cold just now.

I admire Ghiberti's north gate of the baptistery more than that which Michael Angelo thought so fine. It is a wonderful lesson in grouping and movement and expression; and then the border round the south door—did you ever see such exquisite work? little birds,

hart's-tongue fern, millet-seed—everything finished as if by the hand of Nature herself. These great fellows of old did look at Nature closely, and could imitate her! One can fancy them, after a hard day's work, indulging in a bit of carving *con amore*, perhaps some cherished image of a flower or leaf, which they did with special care; and as it came from their hearts, it was and is beautiful for ever.

The façade of the Duomo is finished, so that it is a match for Giotto's tower—one splendid whole. Like sketches in the note-book of a master, the two splendid things, the Duomo and baptistery, find themselves, without apparent premeditation, quite close together—on the same page, as it were. It seems almost a pity they should be so close together, these masterpieces of architecture.

The most interesting acquaintance we have made here is Miss Alexander—she who wrote the 'Songs of Tuscany,' whom Ruskin so highly praised as an artist. There is an indefinable something about her which at once attracts you to her; perhaps it is the absence

of all affectation, perhaps genius, perhaps only just a kind heart.

Just now Florence is infested with dirty, coarse, uneducated pilgrims. Some of the poor creatures, however, are interesting. I came upon a row of them sitting, in various attitudes of fatigue, on the steps of the station. They were poor peasants, with the earnest faces of men who had said to themselves before taking the great step: 'If this thing be true, then no journey is too long, no privation too great for it.'

It is the well-to-do pilgrims with whom I have the quarrel, who come mostly because it makes a pretty excuse for an outing; you see it written all over them.

This is destined to be 'no end' of a letter; but I must stop, although I could tell you a hundred thousand things about Florence, which is a city, village, and country combined, with art, poetry, and history all in one; but by this time I expect you are saying, as M. Alma Tadema eloquently said to us lady students one day at the Royal Academy, 'I would be

very glad *to* you if you would hold your tongues.' So, good-night.

H. M. T.

VENICE.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

What shall I tell you about Venice, now that I am here?

Coming straight from Florence, I feel compelled to fold up one part of my nature and open out another. It is so very different, and awakens quite other thoughts and feelings.

In Florence your mind is kept so much on the stretch of *imagination* and wonder; here, this 'Bride of the Sea' claims all your *admiration*.

This evening, returning from the Lido, I thought her looking perfect. There were rugged piles of antique palaces and roofs, surmounted by the light and lovely cupolas of St. Mark's, which stand out, cut with all the precision of everlasting youth, against the sky. I could just see the purple tops of the hills of Padua, and when I turned my head, I

VENETIAN BEAD-THREADERS.

[To face p. 36.

recognised the mountains of the Tyrol, with their uncertain fringe of snow; they form a sort of turquoise necklace round Venice, and those little islets, with their convents and churches, are the pendants on her bosom.

Venice is less Italian than Florence; the language has a twang of German in it.

The Florentines are more musical, and there are not so many monks here. I miss my Frati; I had so many friends amongst them that I think some time I must go back to see them.

Then the style of the buildings is markedly different; no longer the great, far-extending eaves to the houses, nor the nice cool *loggias*.

I find I am always comparing these two fair cities. In fact, like rival beauties, and I the lover, I find charms in the one which are not in the other, and compensating loveliness in both; but for making a picture I think I have never been anywhere which promises so much as beautiful Venice.

It is so wonderful to see the gondoliers steer their boats without helm. The other night, by moonlight, we formed a part of a little flotilla

which followed one of the concert-boats, and every moment the elegantly-turned prow of a gondola came slipping past close to my very cheek, but never touching our boat, threading its way noiselessly through a maze of gondolas.

I should like you to see an interesting old man I met in the stern of the boat that crosses the Grand Canal. I often sketch him for the sake of giving him fifteen centesimi, and I believe he now comes expressly to be sketched. 'Servo suo, signora,' I hear, if I ever overlook him, and I immediately take out my sketch-book and begin another head, and finish it before we reach the opposite shore, where the fifteen centesimi are duly delivered, and received with, 'Mille grazie, signor*ina*.'

You observe he compliments me this time by calling me *young* lady, a stretch of imagination on his part fully worth *double* what he had received. Poor old man! the first time I sketched him, when the boatman pointed out to him what I was doing, there was such a sad, reproachful look mixed with his poor smile; it seemed to say: 'When I was worth

being painted, cruel Fortune sent no artist to do it; but now——' and he looked sadly across the boat at me. However, after I gave him the centesimi he got happy again, and his old, pinched face went into a thousand wrinkles.

One meets curious old faces and curious souls here and there.

The English element here forms a funny enough little world, with miniature excitements and rivalries which, if one had more time for observation, would be amusing enough. In our little English church we have a young lady presiding at the harmonium who, because she happens to have a sweetheart at sea, gives us every Sunday that beautiful hymn for our brethren at sea. One old gentleman hates the hymn, because the young ladies like it. He says:

'We're not all engaged to be married to sailors,' and so he would like 'something more in our line'! He is a Ceylon coffee merchant. I wonder what his 'line' would be.

Then we have an old dandy, a bachelor, who has been a soldier, and who appears to have

swallowed his ramrod before quitting the service, so straight and upright is he!

The chaplain is a very lady-like, little old gentleman, who does not preach as impressive a sermon as does a vine which screens a window near my little seat. Each Sunday I see the rapid progress the fruit is making. It was in flower when I first came, now there are beautiful bunches of grapes. In one week the grapes had swollen from the size of pins' heads to great bright green globes; I observe, however, they are slower ripening than they are growing. A silent monitor is this living window-blind.

I have made the acquaintance of a most charming old English lady with a decided individuality (which I think too often gets rubbed off people in the course of a long life—we wear smooth, like pebbles in a stream; I like rough corners and salient points and dints better). She is, moreover, very picturesque, and wears a mob-cap, under which is a halo of silver hair.

Years ago, in her wanderings, she came upon

the island of Ischia, and bought some land there—built a house, and planted oliveyards and vineyards, and there set up her household gods. She became a sort of guardian angel to the poor of the island, and used to be called 'the Queen of Ischia.' Finally, one night, whilst sitting at her piano, she was startled by the terrible rumbling and shaking of an earthquake. She had the presence of mind to place herself under a great cross-beam which divided her rooms, and there she stood safe, while her house crumbled down all about her, killing her servants, including the gardener. When she crept out (I have it from her own lips), it was to see the whole beautiful island in ruins, under the summer stars.

She was afterwards the means of obtaining money for the poor survivors, and had wooden houses put up for them ; now, like Bruce's spider, she is coming to set up another home here, and I am to be permitted to paint in her court and garden.

Of Venice itself I have said so little. St. Mark's, for example. The fag-end of a letter

is no place to touch upon such a theme. It is indeed a fitting shrine for the great Apostle, as they say it actually is. But I think our great old Duomo at Florence, abused though it is by some, impresses me as grander, greater—but less of a gem.

The other morning I wakened at four o'clock. I looked out; the sun seemed actually up, and all looked bright. I opened the window; everything was as still as sleep. I thought to myself, 'I'll dress and slip out, and have a look at this "sleeping beauty"'; and so I did.

It was so early that an old pigeon on the plinth of the church opened his eyes and looked at me in utter astonishment, then shook his feathers, changed his position slightly, and went to sleep again. None of his companions were up; I caught them all napping on the cornices and queer little nooks, and looking like parts of the ornaments in stone.

St. Mark's showed me all its beauties which it hides in the glare of broad daylight; its lace-work, its inlaid marbles—everything; and

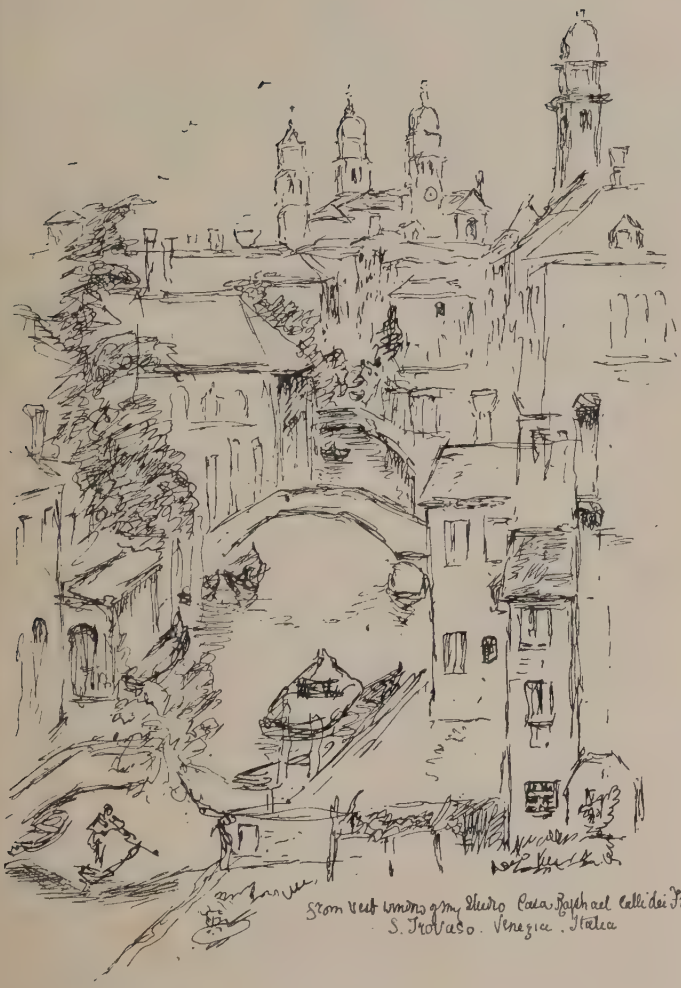
those two mysterious lamps were still burning pale which face the sea, and which they say are ever alight in penitent memory of someone who was put to death wrongfully long ago. It's a beautiful idea, and an awful one too.

By-and-by the cry 'Acqua, buona acqua' began to ring out, and the world became commonplace. The piazza filled with people and the sea with boats, and the pigeons swooped down to someone who had brought them some seed. You remember the soft, cool touch of their little feet on your hand and the rustle of their wings. They looked like bits of the cathedral come to life; they startled me when I saw the cloud of them taking flight, quitting their night quarters, and I looked to see the dislodgment of so much of the building.

Then the Ducal Palace! was ever anything so beautiful? What one thinks of most in looking at and walking about Venice is of the men who had the courage to adventure such splendid labour and art upon so precarious a foundation. How great the idea! Michael Angelo cut his David out of a cast away and

broken piece of marble. A less great artist would have waited for some perfect piece from the mountains of Carrara. The old Venetians put forth as great skill similarly here. How did they know but that the ocean would one day sweep up and swallow their lovely masterpiece? It seems to me a miracle it is there yet. These men must have worked in faith, and in love too, or we should not have such a wonderful poem in marble to read to-day, of that I am sure.

I am writing at my window after sunset, trying to catch the breeze which I see rippling the water below, and wishing a great deal of success to the swallows that are screaming and wheeling in all the excitement of the chase after the dreadful *zanzare* (mosquitoes) that literally devour you. The days are intensely hot, but the nights are delightful. We often take our camp-stools out to the *zattera* close by, and sit and watch the great July moon rise behind Santa Maria Salute, the cupola standing out distinctly on its red disc, and the masts and cordage of the ships cutting strangely into



from rest window of my studio Casa Raphael Calli dei Frati -
S. Trovaso. Venezia. Italia

the light. Then up she comes, no longer blushing red, and sails out into the sky; but before she is so high, it is 'mystic wonderful' to watch the lights on the Guidecca reflected in the dark water, and the little lamps up the rigging of the dark vessels about, and the coloured lanterns on the gliding gondolas, like the boat which bore King Arthur after death. The stars above are nothing beside all these earthly attractions! Westward, on the Legune-morte, the after-glow lingers till the moon puts it out.

I cannot conclude without unburdening my mind of a crime I committed the other day! I killed a friend! Are you shocked? I will tell you how it was.

I have had a companion in my studio ever since I came—a small dove-coloured moth, with a little silver head and two intensely black tiny eyes and horns. It was always with me. In the evening it would flit round my lamp (causing me great anxiety), then be lost in the vast space of gloom beyond, or fly, like a mote, athwart the morning sunbeam. I got

accustomed to it, and knew when it would come.

Someone suggested to me that when I wore fur this thing would eat it. Could it harm anything—so modest, so timid and intangible as it was?

'*Moth* and rust doth corrupt.'

One day (my heart grows heavy as I write) I brought out my furs and a wolf-skin rug, and whilst admiring them in the glorious sunshine, lo! like the spirit of the hour, my moth flitted gladly by.

Ah, wretch that I was! I clutched a sunbeam and my moth!

I opened my cruel hand. It was stained with an infinitesimal quantity of what I myself am made of—*dust!* I declare my heart stood still for a moment, and a lump rose in my throat at the thought that I had extinguished an innocent, happy life.

I hated my furs. I have hated them ever since. I mourn my moth. Could he come back, I would leave him my mat and coat; he should eat *every hair* of them if he chose.

You must not laugh at my tragi-comic story, for it is a fact that tears came into my eyes over this tragedy, and it put me out for a long while.

Here I am at the end of another long sheet, rambling away, but it is Sunday, and idle hands do mischief still, and you suffer this time, *chère amie*.

Good-night, and good-bye for the present.

H. M. T.

ROMA.

MY DEAR E——,

I cannot spoil the heading of my letter by particularizing my humble abode, although, on reflection, it is not unclassical—Via Quattro Fontani—and within possible reach of the Appian Way and the Three Taverns. Only think of it, and a Roman sun shining in at my window as it shone on the November mornings when the Cæsars breakfasted on the Palatine, and even perhaps on St. Paul when he 'blessed God and took courage'!

We were actually in the basement of St. Paul's 'own hired house' in the Flaminian

A ROMAN FLOWER-GIRL.

[To face p. 48.

Way (Corso), where probably he wrote his letter to Philemon, and the Epistle to the Ephesians. I took off my glove and passed my hand over the moist brick wall against which his toga might have brushed a thousand and odd years ago.

The delight of being in Rome comes fresh upon me every morning. To be able to walk to the Sistine Chapel, and to sit gazing (until one's neck is broken) at those marvellous works on its ceiling. To have Praxiteles' Fawn for a near neighbour, and to be next door—actually next door—to the Barberina Palace, with its too much praised Beatrice di Cenci, is not this the *ne plus ultra* of artistic enjoyment? Florence comes very near to it, but Rome is Rome, and must stand first.

What I feel most here, which may surprise you, is an extraordinary calm.

I go on to the Pincio at that traditionally dangerous hour when the sun is going down, and the moon rising with such brilliancy as to make one quite understand Endymion's love, and there seems to reign a peace I never felt

anywhere else in the same degree, so still, and calm, and restful.

I like looking down upon Rome from the Pincio, for you see that, in all her beauty and grandeur, she is visibly clasped in the arms of the sweet, green hills—and turnip-fields! (likest thou the figure?), and the country, with its woods and sweet, home-like scents. It is not like some of the *modern* great cities—all city, city, city, and no room for God's beautiful country. *My* big city should have a window-pane through it to see Nature.

After enjoying the view, we go up higher to the Church of Monte San Trinità, and sit and listen to the evensong chanted by the nuns, who are like sweet caged birds up in the barred organ-loft. Such exquisite singing! it is world-famous. One bird in particular has such wonderful notes, so sad and silvery, that I saw the tears roll down the snuffy nose of a poor Franciscan friar as he knelt with his beads in his hands, listening, and probably thinking of when he was no friar at all.

The Porta del Popolo, with its Medicean

arms, is that through which Keats, sick yet hopeful, passed, never to repass, and so many other eager travellers.

It is right that Keats should rest here—all that can rest of him. He sang of the creeds of ancient Rome, and he sleeps beneath the dark shade of a grove of cypresses, or rather on the edge of it, with just enough of the westering sun to make the violets flower which form his quilt.

He has got a bed-fellow now—Severn the painter, who was his death-bed companion fifty or sixty years ago.

And Shelley, with the seraphic face, I have seen where his heart rests at last. I am told, however, that it is not his *heart*—no matter, it is some of the mortal part of him: we have a good share of the immortal. I stood over the acanthus leaves, which spread out like great green hands warming themselves over the ashes of the poet.

I have also seen the Forum and the Coliseum, and that grand equestrian statue on the Capitol, which caused Michael Angelo to exclaim

'Cammine!' ('March!'). All these I have seen, and more, and yet I am only beginning.

My thoughts and admiration are chiefly centred round the Sistine Chapel and Raphael's Stanze. There is no Greek ideal about that work; it is human nature: and the beauty of the tone and the colouring makes everything else look little and poor.

I steal off early in the morning, and get set down in that magnificent Colonnade before St. Peter's, which has the impudence to make you look like ants crawling up its steps. I then pass through the caterpillar-like Papal bodyguard and up the long stairs of the Vatican, to sit for hours before the 'School of Athens' and the 'Disputa.'

Will art ever surpass these, or even come up to them?

I went into San Pietro in Vincoli to see the 'Moses.' Is it possible to find anything grander than that? *Si largement fait*—everything looks *petite* beside it, even the other figures by the same hand.

I stand in *wonder* before this masterpiece;

but I *love* the beautiful 'Pietà' in St. Peter's. You know, it is said that Michael Angelo never finished anything after he became a man. So nice was his judgment that when half through a work some fault, unseen to less trained eyes, would strike him, and he would put the work aside, and begin another in the hope that it would be more perfect, and so on; but the 'Pietà' I speak of was done in his youth, and is finished to a grain of dust. It is not in a good light—that is to say, there is very little light, which is a pity, for it could bear the strong glare of the Piazza.

I want to go to-day to the Church of Santà Prisca on the Aventine, to paint a quaint little organ I have taken a fancy to; but it has been a wet morning, only stopping for a sob now and then, and beginning again like a babe when it takes a right fit of screaming on.

I asked an old monk, with a white dress and a red cross on his breast, and great ox-like eyes, if I might paint it; and, after consulting a very insignificant-looking little brown priest

(who, nevertheless, seemed to have the rule, and who brought out a great cotton pocket-handkerchief and took snuff before he would answer), he informed me that I might come to-day. I still may hope to go, as the weather shows signs of clearing; the clouds are keeping themselves up as high as they can, looking gloomily cheerful, with the sun sending sickly smiles across them.

I have visited several studios, but, as I anticipated, modern Roman art is much the same as the modern Florentine; the work is conventional. Italian artists of to-day all seem to be *sat upon* by the greatness of their past, and do not dare to attempt anything but the most trifling subjects, which, to be sure, they execute prettily and handily enough; but it is not work for men, and the fashion of it will soon pass away.

Every day I pass your favourite fountain in the Piazza di Spagna. I call it a horrible, ugly thing, like a sauce-boat, and stuck all over with such absurd ornaments to bolster up its deformity.

The Trevi is *my* fountain, with its rocks and ferns and pigeons. I also admire those two before St. Peter's when the sun shines and they fizz up into the blue Italian sky, backed by that wondrous Colonnade: they are a dainty sight to set before a Pope.

By-the-by, I was very near seeing his Holiness the other day. I happened to be in the Sculpture Gallery in the Belvedere while he was taking a sunning in the garden, and as I descended the stairs I found men dressed in crimson satin and velvet, cut in shape like a herald's tabard, very old-fashioned and gorgeous, and others in Michael Angelo slashed doublets of yellow, black, and scarlet — all lounging about awaiting his Holiness, who was just about to pass into the library and so to his apartments. But, alas! the porter came up to me, and courteously begged that I would depart, as no one was permitted to see the Holy Father.

I was amused at a gentleman who was at the head of an English party who at that moment wanted to go into the library.

'Non posso, signore, non adesso,' said the porter.

'Now, if you please,' said the father of the party, 'will you let us in—"Yes" or "No"?'

'Dico di no, signore,' was the reply.

'Now, now, now!' said our Englishman: 'why can't you say simply "Yes" or "No"?'

He probably considered the Italian language was all very well when people were not in a hurry and in earnest, but when it was a matter of business it was quite another thing.

In despair the porter turned to me to help him. I at once explained. The Englishman raised his hat and thanked me, adding:

'Had the porter said "No" at first, we need not have been losing so much time.'

I had a good laugh.

I have once visited the Pantheon, which I believe to be the work of the Etruscans, not the Romans, judging from what I have studied of their work in their own adopted country, Umbria. I don't know if anyone else holds this opinion, but I am convinced that not alone that wonderful structure, but all the greatest

'RESTING.'

[To face p. 57.

and most lasting of the so-called work of the Romans is—or is copied from—these giants of an unknown past—these eocenes, one might call them. Where did they come from?

In exchange for my last letter you sent me a post-card, and you flatter yourself you have done your duty. It is not so; nothing but a letter is counted by your devoted friend,

H. M. T.

So write soon, *carissima mia.*

Ana Capri,
Isola di Capri.

My dear E——,

Although my time is so fully occupied finishing my picture, I must pen you a few lines. I think it is St. Thomas à Kempis who recommends us not to waste time on conversation, but he does not say anything about letter-writing. There were no post-offices in those days, or I suppose he would—especially such

letters as mine, which wear so broadly the stamp of the naughty writer!

What would you think of this lovely island? We overlook the Bay of Naples, with Vesuvius smoking his pipe quietly across the water, and Ischia and Procida lying as if on an azure plate before us, and in the fore-ground a garden of flowers — asphodels, which we only used to hear of in poems and see in paintings; myrtles, and groves of oranges and lemons.

And such a spring as we are enjoying! We seem to be spying into all the secrets of Spring herself! Often in the day she lets her gauze curtain of mist drop down over the rugged face of the mountain, to lift it again with a smile to show us how richly green she is making every spot of earth, and how wonderfully lilac and pink and gray she can make the hoary old rocks.

And then her flowers! She exhausts her store here, and only leaves a few poor pretty wild things for you in the bottom of her apron. However, she is kind, for she keeps the primroses back for you — I have not found a

single one here; but bold-eyed daisies, with their little white night-caps with ever so big frills trimmed with pink, she scatters in plenty! The field-daisy and the sparrow are everywhere, and everywhere the same: only here they seem bigger, bolder, more self-asserting than their modest relations at home.

Last night we met an old woman returning to her cottage with a great armful of fragrant myrtle to make her supper fire with. Only fancy! a fire of myrtle-branches to boil a pot of polenta; that is Italy—the sordid and the beautiful mixed up together so strangely.

The southern extremity of the island is covered with sweet-flowering cistus, yellow, lilac and white; and rose-coloured gladiolus, and deep blue gentianella; and heaths and ferns of each fine variety everywhere, maidenhair in plenty, and even devalia. Our old well down in the court is full of it—the roof, I mean—trembling and waving as green as emeralds; also the broken arches and walls of Pompeii are draped with a living mantle of these delicate creatures.

Rosemary and sweet thyme grow wild on the mountain, so that in walking one's feet press out the sweetest perfumes: quite a Rimmel's shop for fragrance!

Our rooms are always full of flowers: and into our sweet little kitchen window there peeps a great orange-tree full of golden fruit, and covered with white blossoms, looking like a bride adorned for her bridegroom.

The people must needs have a certain refinement and sweetness, living amongst such surroundings from their infancy; and they are a very gracious race, and a very beautiful. Up here at Ana Capri it is quite a Moorish type—great dark eyes and beautiful dreamy faces.

We occupy the whole of the upper story of a *masseria*, or farmhouse. A stone staircase outside, of several flights, leads up to our terrace, with its vine (*pergola*), on to which our windows open, French fashion. Here we can walk and sit and look away over the blue sea towards Sicily, and the not-far-off coast of Africa. Naples looks like pink-and-white

coral strewn along the circular shores of the bay. We see the lights distinctly at night, though it lies twenty miles off.

From the end of our terrace another flight of steps leads up on to the flat roof where we often sit in the mornings and evenings. The roof is covered with great broad whinstone flags, flat, and in the middle rounded into blunt cupolas, which gives such an Eastern appearance to the houses here.

Although our village of Ana Capri and our farmhouse are a long way, and a steep way, off the town of Capri, hardly a day passes that some English people do not make their way up to see us. Sometimes they come as early as breakfast-time, to avoid the heat of the day. Then the girls of the village come to see us, and generally bring great baskets of flowers on their heads for our rooms, or lemons and oranges in a basket, with their nice fresh green leaves and stems about them like a ready-made still-life, and they finish their visit by dancing the tarantella, which is so pretty and graceful, and danced to a tambourine.

Much as I admire the Italian sea and sky, there are days when it rouses no enthusiasm in

me. To-day everything is too still. As in life, there is not much interest in a dead calm. The sea is characterless; the sky has not a

cloud to hang a thought on; the boats, with pinkish-white sails, look like happy ghosts basking on the horizon. Only now and again our cheeks are gently fanned by a baby æolus.

Yesterday was better; we had some rain, passionate bursts of it—it was so cool and refreshing!

We have decided not to go to Naples this time, there is so much sickness there just now; there generally is in beautiful, dirty Napoli, but we intend going to Viareggio instead, so write to me there *poste restante.* It is getting late, so good-night! You are fast asleep, perhaps dreaming of me, since I am thinking of you.

H. M. T.

VIAREGGIO.

AMICA MIA,

When I opened your letter, I was sitting amid a very gay scene in one of the lounging places built out in the sea in this charming Italian seaside resort.

You all seem to have separated like beads dropped from a string, two rolling to America, two to York, and one erratic one all by itself to Norway, and, again, two more to Paris. I wish you had rolled a little further down to me. But no; when you receive this you also will be probably by the sea, as we are. Only we are on the shore of the Mediterranean, you by the North Sea. You are not to think it is all in your favour as to genuine sea-breezes. We get plenty here, and our sea is bold and rough, and gives the idea of immensity, liberty and action, which is not common to the Mediterranean.

Everybody lives in the *stabilimento*, as they call it, from morning till night, the heat in the town being still so great. Imagine a *pleasure village* in the midst of waves, with restaurants and shops and music-rooms, and places for reading and writing, bathing, and promenading and lounging, well shaded from the sun, and open to every breeze; and crowds of fashionable people, who mostly group themselves in little circles, the ladies embroidering the most

pretty bits of uselessness in the most enchanting (for those who like it) of Parisian costumes, and the other sex reading, playing billiards or bathing, as the case may be.

The bathing is very amusing. Gentlemen and ladies, quite prettily dressed, with broad belts, and clothes fit for walking, go into the sea together, which is not so fiercely cold as your sea, where three dips, and out, are enough. Here they spend hours in the water. Altogether it is a diverting scene, and there are so many really beautiful young girls and children that it is quite interesting, too.

I have just been watching one little fellow, about three years old, very prettily and carefully dressed. A lady beckoned to him, and presented him with a little sweet biscuit. He raised his black eyes to her face solemnly, drew his two little buff boots together, and made her a low bow. She gave him another, and again the solemn eyes were raised to her face, the little feet were put together, and the little body bent before her. I could not help smiling at the little scene.

We go down, like the other idlers, early, ensconce ourselves in comfortable arm-chairs made of rustic wood, and begin sketching or painting in water-colours the beautiful Carrara Mountains, with the still more beautiful background of Apennines. And here we stay until twelve o'clock, which is lunch-time. Often we have this meal on the sands close to the sea, where grapes and wine taste, I think, especially good and refreshing.

At night we go walking on the mole, which projects quite half a mile, I should think, into the sea.

You cannot conceive anything more enchanting than the moonlight nights we have been having, and the gay stir of shipping and boats, and the old water-melon sellers' huts lighted up, and the far-off Spezzia's revolving light tipping the waves quite close to us; then the splendid sheet-lightning over the Carrara Mountains. All is so enchanting! We generally stay out until ten o'clock, then home to *cena* and to bed.

The town is overflowing with fruit—peaches,

green and purple figs and grapes, which you can have for a few soldi; and very lovely is the colour of sea, sky and sands; and the dunes, with their ragged fringe of grass; and the far-stretching forests of stone-pines, greener than any emerald against the azure hills, along that road by which Byron, Trelawny and Leigh Hunt drove to find and burn the drowned body of our Shelley on the long line of sands which lie Spezzia-ward.

Last night we walked in that direction by sunset, and methought the waves, all purple and copper-colour, were prating still of the event, boasting to one another as they rolled in to our feet: 'Ah, ha! we tossed your poet's head, with its high forehead, and thin long hair, and little features, and wild gray eyes, and then we took his life away, and tossed him on the shore.' The mountains, too, in the fading light, seemed stretching one above another to peer down upon the tragic scene.

I went on talking about it until Rose began to cast furtive looks behind, to see if the poet in his *garment of flame* might not be following

us, spouting immortal verse, wilder and more weird than ever he uttered in life. *Well* for you that you are not near me! I should make you feel creepy, too.

I wish I could convey to you some idea of the loveliness of this spot, and just now such a beautiful fleet of boats as is passing, as if expressly to delight us! Expecting soon to see your handwriting, I am, as ever, yours,

H. M. T.

FRANCE

A BRETON WIDOW.

[To face p. 71.

CONCARNEAU,

LOWER BRITTANY.

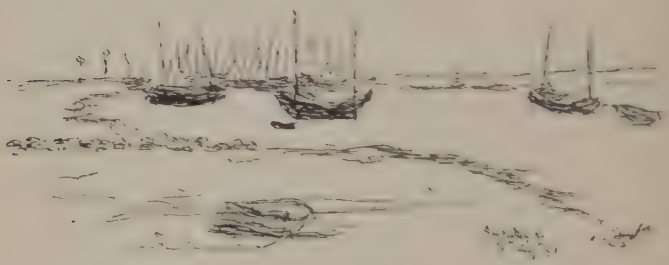
MY DEAR FRIEND,

We have decided to pass the winter in Brittany, and have found this charming retreat by the sea.

Concarneau is a sea-surrounded and wall-surrounded fishing village, and very quaint and beautiful. We are in the new town, outside the fortifications, and pass by means of a ferry to the other side, where the prettiest country is to be found ; but the sea is nicer on our side, and the simple fisher life of the place is a constant interest to us, and is full of picturesque movement.

They have an interesting superstition about

the sea, which is, that if you linger on the shore after sunset, you will hear the cries of those who have been drowned. One can easily imagine their moans on a winter's night, as the great waves come thundering in, and dash themselves to pieces on the rocky borders of the land. But when the sea is calm, as it was yesterday,



the whole aspect is changed. I wish you could have seen it. It looked like an opal, cut flat, and the little fishing-boats seemingly up in the sky; the horizon quite lost, sky and sea the same tint. You might fancy the sky touched your feet, only for the little decided turn over and plash of the long border ripple on the buff sands. And at night, when the tide is in and the lamps of the old fortress are reflected in the

calm water, it is lovely, the numerous fishing-boats adding so much to the beauty.

The other evening, while Charlotte, our landlady's daughter, was blowing up our wood fire, I observed her soft brown eyes looking sweeter and less sad than usual, and I said: 'Charlotte, how has the sardine-fishing gone to-day? I guess well.'

'Mademoiselle, it is a miracle I have to record: François caught nothing at one o'clock to-day, Pierre came to tell us—he had caught absolutely nothing! Mother cried: "Charlotte, take forty sous out of the drawer, and give them for the deliverance of the poor souls in Purgatory, and let us see if the good God will not have pity on us." It was done, and at that very hour François took *deux milles* sardines! Is not that a miracle, miss?'

What shall a man give for his soul? thought I—forty sous? And can a man redeem the soul of his brother? Yes, for forty sous! Charlotte looked so devout, so full of faith and contentment, that the funny twinkle you say is often in my eyes, and must have been there

then, died away, and I behaved as was expected of me—gravely, and with an air of full conviction. I could not find it in my heart to do the least little bit of proselytizing or preaching. I left Charlotte in the happy enjoyment of her religion.

We have had one *promenade sur la mer*, to see some curious dolmens at a distance. It was at the invitation of a young French cavalier, whose acquaintance I made over my picture on the sands. He took us a delicious sail in his little yacht, and my squire being still in his teens, I could treat him as a child, and enjoyed it in silent luxury—the right way to enjoy such a pleasure. It was perfect, the sails making a delightful shade. My young friend is profoundly respectful to me. I think he considers me the genius of painting personified, whom he discovered by chance, in sabots, on the seashore. He brought his father and mother to see me in my open-air studio. I glanced at his young face the while, and thought what a good character his chivalry, mixed with experience and common-sense, should make.

We have another sand friend, a poor little old woman, who runs after us whenever she sees us. If she meets us walking, she asks us where we are bound for, and then says she thinks the air will do her good, too ; and so off she hobbles with us, and takes her seat on a rock, and asks me to put her into my picture, on which I reply, *at her peril !*

So you do not quite agree with my opinions about copying the antique. But what is the good of eternally drawing those straight noses and oval eyes and perplexing lather of curls, amongst which I used to lose myself in an antique head? It surely does not prepare you for modern craniums. Present-day noses take a vast deal more liberty to themselves than the antique ones ever dare, and modern eyes are not all oval, nor mouths like Cupid's bow. I don't like Cupid mouths, and I like any nose better than a rigidly straight one. That copying business was the mistake of the past generation ; I maintain it is not so good practice as Nature. Did you ever see a Greek head with crow's-feet about the eyes, or two or three nicks

in the forehead, or with a slightly hollow cheek? —all of which are a thousand times more interesting and suggestive than those great bullet-headed gods and goddesses who never were either sick, sore, or sorry in their immortal days. And before I have done, I must warn you of trying to imitate any master, however splendid he may have been. Try and find out how they worked if you like, but *say your own say*, in the best way you can. Look at living Nature for yourself. We are independent searchers after truth, forgetting old things, and in search for new. The more we can divest ourselves of conventional notions about the antique and throw ourselves into everyday human life, the better chance we shall have of rightly representing an occurrence, though it did take place many hundreds of years ago. Men were men, and women women, in all essential turns and tricks, just as they are to-day.

I think I am in a pompous vein this morning, don't you? I have been eating mushrooms last night, big French fellows, like toad-stools:

can that have anything to do with it? I went to sleep with the conviction that I was poisoned, and left orders with Charlotte, if she heard any stir, to send for the doctor; but, to my surprise, and just the least bit of disappointment, I wakened, and found myself still with the old surroundings, viz.: the man-of-war on the chimney-piece, sailing off among the old china teacups and saucers; a little three-decker suspended by a cord from the rafters; a grand tableau of a shipwreck hung before me; and all the litter we have made in this sumptuous apartment. We are breaking Charlotte's heart about this room. It is the pride of her life, and she is always picking up my paint rags, or anything she finds about. "Mon Dieu! does not mademoiselle understand that they ruin the polish on things?" She even told me that I had made the arm-chair rotten (*pourri*) with my turpentine. Poor body! she is sadly torn between an inclination to like us, while fearing for this royal apartment. I told her last night she would be glad to hear that I was poisoned. 'O mon Dieu! tout au contraire!'

I must tell you what I saw when driving yesterday. We were on our way to solemn old Quimper. We passed many curiously-shaped and beautiful old trees, and one in especial

greatly impressed me: it was a huge old pine —*sapin*, as it is called here—leaning over as if whispering to a young ash-tree which was drawn closely against its naked trunk, with its head slightly bent backwards, as if listening respect-

fully to the experience of its elder. We passed them, and then, on turning round on the rising ground beyond, I saw them still talking together; and off the furthest hill their outline was cut against the sky, the one bending down, the other clinging beside it. All the other trees stood alone or in rows, but this old fellow had taken the young ash into his special confidence, and was pouring the wisdom of years into its willing ear. I made out the whole conversation *en route:* there was a great deal of *sunshine* as well as *storm* in it, but I forget it now.

We were caught in a heavy rain the other day. When we started the sky looked tolerably settled, and there was every prospect of a delightful walk. We strolled along by the little chatty streams that danced along so merrily over flat stones and past mossy boulders. We were admiring the prospect before us, and enjoying the different effects, not observing that the finest of them was owing to a fast-gathering mist which began to envelop the foot of the hill not far off, and continued until

only the top was visible, cutting sharply against the gray sky. The rest of it was completely covered as by a giant's cloak, which hung all around it.

'Isn't it beautiful!' I said to Rose. 'The old fellow has pulled his thin old gray mantle up to his ears, to let us see how fine he looks in it!'

By this time a few drops of rain spit in my eye by way of warning. So to turn and get home as fast as we could was all we could do, and turn we did.

The hill by this time had his head completely under the blanket (a wet blanket), and then came on a thorough wet night.

We had but one umbrella between us, and it rained and blew, and rained again; the road ran with mud and water, and I began to feel the cold drops down my back.

The little streams I had enjoyed began to sound like tiresome gossips; no longer the light little chatty talk they had before. I would not take any notice of them, nor turn my head to see how the moss on the rocks

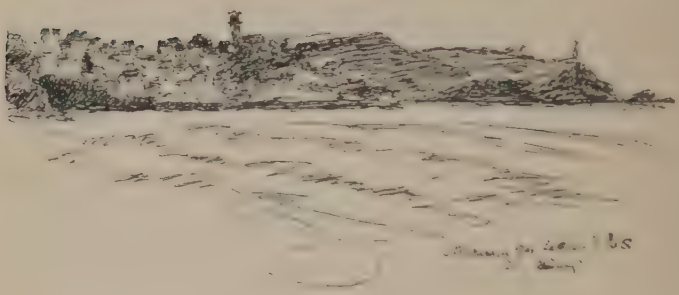
looked. When we got in we were wet to the skin, and in spite of all remedies I was feverish for two days, and our boots have refused to take any polish ever since.

The weather is still unsettled and very wild. The wind has been blowing the foam of the waves yards high, and the little sea-birds could

not walk with being blown sideways along. It has been quite dangerous crossing the ferry; the sailors had to guide themselves by a submarine cable attached to the rocks on either side, to prevent the barque from tossing out *au large*. We go for a walk every evening after the work is done and the model dismissed. I must put on my waterproof now, and see how

that restless and most interesting element is behaving itself in weather like this, so adieu, *ma chère.*

H. M. T.



DOUARNENEZ,
LOWER BRITTANY.

You see we are still in beautiful sea-girt Brittany, and have settled down for a time in this dear old place. We tried Normandy, but we prefer Brittany, and we consider the Bretons a far more gracious race—or we were unfortunate in our acquaintance with the Norman manners. For example, a porter at Trouville, who for no reason expected a 'tip,' or *pour*

boire, which he did not get, made me a low bow, and told me that I should go to *enfer*, and lest I should not understand my destination, shut all but his middle finger, and pointed three times emphatically downwards. Then when we entered a farm, the farmer scowled at us, and said we should not paint *there!* Next we tried the open sea, and just as I had got seated, as I thought, at a respectful distance, a big wave came bouncing up, and rushed under my camp-stool. A Norman wave, observe. No manners there either.

The coast scenery about here is very grand, the town is very ancient, and full of poetic suggestion and historic romances (unwritten), and the streets are so tortuous that three times I have lost myself. There are some very, very old houses, with the date 1584 and earlier, and there are pictures everywhere. It is full of animate and inanimate paintability. The sea I never saw of so intense a blue; I think it must be like the Mediterranean. Withal it looks so beautiful, it has drowned seven men last week, and I am told so many as a hundred

have lost their lives since the beginning of the year, so dangerous is the coast, and the cliffs are very steep and jagged, but such glorious colouring everywhere.

I wish I could send you some of the beautiful peaches that a woman has just been loading us with, and flowers of a vividness of colour which

I never saw equalled—old friends scarcely recognisable in their splendid uniforms.

I am sitting writing at a window from which I have a view directly before me of the Ile Tristan, surrounded by the bluest, greenest, purplest sea ; a few houses are huddled together at one corner, as if to keep themselves warm. From this distance they look like a row of faces

with eyes looking over to us—for eyes I mean windows—and under their eyes are moustachios of vines on their upper lips. I get so much interest and fun out of things by regarding them as living beings. For example, my memory is haunted by an old tree, not the one that was whispering to the young ash, but another, who was quite alone—forlorn, withered and hoary with age, and leaning almost paralytic on a little patch of ground by which the Aven flows. The little river turns back and doubles round it, feeling compassion for its age and infirmities. It was bubbling and dancing before, but here it glides smoothly, moistening the green carpet upon which the veteran leans in the tenderest manner, and then goes more soberly on its way, as if taught a lesson—rivers, too, may cease to flow! The whole thing is photographed for the present on my mind. I hope these things, when we forget them, are laid up somewhere for us, like sweet little stories, to be ready again on some rainy day in the future. I surely have a library somewhere of such.

Coming home to-day I encountered a party of pilgrims to St. Anne, a place at some distance—such a picturesque group, with their long staffs and their curious costumes. The men's jackets were rich with gold and silver em-

broidery. I wished I could have caught one of these rare birds to paint as they passed.

I have made one or two outdoor studies lately. We have had such glorious hot autumn days. The sun looked back just as he was about to step across the line, and won all our hearts and drew us out of doors. We picnicked on the beach one day, where my little model

posed. We had an escort of young savages, who, as the day grew hotter, dropped their rags and plunged into the little pools all about. One of them, fair in every sense of the word, the sunlight on her creamy flesh, golden hair and rosy cheeks, was a treat for a painter's eye. By-and-by two little naked lads jumped out of the water on to a ram's back, and formed a group such as you see on old Greek bas-reliefs. It shows me the old masters must have lived much more in the open air, and took their notions from similar scenes. Two little kids frisking also reminded me of something I had seen in the Louvre. We stayed and worked and lounged until the Tristan lights made long fiery needles in the sea.

I am also painting in my studio an old woman who has five sons, all fishermen. They all five came tramping up our stairs to see their mother *sur la toile*. Tall, bronzed, handsome fellows, with the solemnest faces, all nodding their approval and claiming a photograph, then shaking hands with us.

Our chief companion here is a great amber

and white collie with soft golden eyes, that get scarlet when he is angry, but like sunshine when he smiles. When we first came he rushed savagely at us and greatly frightened us, then he became surly, and yielded a sulky consent to what he saw was permitted by his

mistress, always with a protesting growl, as much as to say: 'I don't like it, but I'll say nothing.'

By degrees his expression relaxed, and he would lie at our feet. Now the conquest is complete, and he is our stanchest friend in Douarnenez. He takes every possible care of

us, escorting us out and home again, and growling at other dogs who come near us. He lays his good muzzle on our knees, and even puts his big white paws on our shoulders.

The inhabitants of Douarnenez seem to have in their homes many *luxuries*, but few of the necessaries of life. I account for it thus: The mariners go away abroad to foreign climes and return with fine things, which they give to their mothers and wives, who stick them about their rooms. You will scarcely believe that the first evening we arrived we had *penknives* given to us to cut our food, and this in a room glittering with looking-glasses and things carved in sandal-wood. It is true, and they were borrowed from men-friends for the occasion.

This morning I had the Ephesian foppery of desiring to have my boots cleaned, so my obliging *femme de chambre* took them downstairs and plunged them into a tub of water! Imagine my look when she presented them to me, smiling delightedly. When she saw my expression she assured me they were *bien propre*, and she went away with a shrug of the

shoulders, as much as to say, 'There is no pleasing these English!' This will give you the least little bit of an idea of how far back Douarnenez is.

I send you a few wild flowers, hoping some of the colour will remain. As I was picking them, a Frenchman who prides himself on his English told me they were all *savage!* They don't look it, do they?

I must run and give this to the courier who carries the letters on foot across the hills from town to town and village to village, so adieu.

H. M. T.

MY FAVOURITE HUT.

Pont Aven, Finistère,
Basse Bretagne.

My dear E——,

I had made a vow that I should not scribble any more for two long months to come, but I must break it, or just untie it for a moment, to thank you for your letter and to tell you of our experiences here.

If you come to this place expecting to find an Eden, you will be disappointed ; but if you come expecting an ordinarily picturesque country, you will probably be struck with an indescribable something, which may inspire you to paint, although you may not be able to catch and imitate faithfully what is before you.

It is, you know, the sweet land of Merlin and King Arthur, and was once one with England. Look at the name Cornaille, the name of the district in which Pont Aven is. Is it not Cornwall in other spelling? All its folk-lore and traditions are the same as those in that part of England—almost identical.

The weather is cold, and not much like spring, except for the primroses, and cherry and blackthorn blossoms. Nature seems to be in the act of performing her toilet, and a little cross when you look at her. She has got the flowers on her head already, but her green mantle is not yet donned, and altogether she is not by any means so charming as she means to be by-and-by.

Still, there is plenty to admire. There is nothing so enjoyable as God's glorious hills and glens under His sunshine or in gloom, or so delightful as the gray boulders and clear streams under quiet skies such as we rejoice in. We have all this here, such bracken-covered glens, and beautifully tinted rocks, and clear little bounding brooks. I wish you could enjoy it all with me, also the walks in the evening with the glorious effects of light, and sunsets, and after-glows; they are too exquisite for words. Such a lovely dapple-skyed, golden-sunseted Sabbath as this has been, with now and then a thrush warbling away in the purple woods, and here and there a bunch of prim-

roses peeping out of the edges of the many brooklets, and along the old moss-covered walls that border the paths and fields. The birds are not yet in full song ; they seem to be

practising and clearing their voices for the approaching concert, 'matinée musicale,' that burst of the orchestra which comes some glorious spring morning at break of day, the blackbirds and thrushes taking the lead, and singing us awake, and bidding us leave our pillows and come forth and rejoice with them. Who does not remember those songs of joy whilst still the world is sleeping ?

As usual, we are most comfortably housed.

This is a dear little inn, kept by three little old maiden ladies, and a big black cat, with a tail like a bottle-brush!

I am too comfortable here. I feel so snug in my bed that I hate to get up in the morning, and so cosy by my wood fire in the evening that I don't want to go to bed; and after déjeuner I have eaten so many nice, sweet things that I feel too lazy to work. Altogether, I think the sooner I get away from Miss Julie, Miss Caddie, and Miss Rosine the better, if I would not end in being a little sleepy fat old lady like themselves.

Whilst I was perusing your last letter Miss Julie popped in and said:

'Mad'moiselle, ce n'est pas une lettre, c'est un *journal!*' and then I had to stop reading and go through the usual ceremony of introducing you, by description. She was much interested, and gave me her unqualified approval, before bidding us good-night. I think if my letters were not from very nice people, she would think it her duty to give me a scolding, but as they happen to be all that she can desire, her

face beams with pleasure when handing them to me—'Encore des lettres, Mad'moiselle,' when I come in from my 'hut' or from the studio.

I must tell you about my 'hut'; I found it in a wood, and have been doing the hermit there, during the long spell of gray days we have been having, and have consequently advanced my landscape very nearly to completion. I delight in the days I spend out there. Rose brings me my dinner at twelve o'clock. I am quite hungry at that Elizabethan hour, as we rise at six, and there is a little well, which you will see immortalized in my picture, at which I refresh myself. I kneel down, and, after, like Narcissus, admiring myself in the clear depths, dip my nose in and take a long drink. It is so clear that you can see a little shell that somebody dropped in, lying still and white at the bottom. Halfway over the water is a delicate curtain of green, drawn to shade it from the sun; you know the minute bright little green plant that grows on water—that is it.

Then I go back to my hut and resume my work, and feel like the holy monk of Coppenhurst, inclined to bid all travellers 'pass on, and interrupt not my devotions!' for old beggar men and women sometimes hobble along the path on their way to Migan, a village perched right on the top of the hill above me. They usually stop to ask me if I am not cold, and when I assure them 'no' they cross themselves and pass on. Rose comes in the evening to help me with my traps and to have a nice walk home.

These I call my picnic days. Rose likes better my days in the studio, when she reads aloud while I work.

There are many artists here, and we have quite a grand night-class in the large salon of the Hôtel des Voyageurs, next door, to which we all go three times a week and have models. Each one carries his or her easel and candle, and then we draw for places. I make pen-and-ink sketches, mostly of the people round me. I find them on the whole better fun than the models. One good old soul would not let me

sketch her face in my note-book. The fact was, she had a portrait of herself which represented her as beautiful, and she had no notion of letting a 'botch' like me transmit a plain unvarnished tale even to my own small circle of the world. I don't think I shall let *you* make *my* snub nose in clay, lest people should imagine I had not *once* been *as lovely* as the Venus Milo!

I must tell you of a sad little scene I witnessed to-day. By the tinkle of a bell like a sheep-bell, I knew that a funeral was coming up the hill, and on looking, there was first a handsome little lad bearing the silver cross, with its knot of white ribbon, showing that it was for the young, then the old priest in his white muslin and yellow satin robe, and three-cornered flat hat, surrounded by choir-boys similarly dressed, all singing a sad little chant. Then came the little deal coffin, covered with the baby's quilt, and carried in the poor father's arms, followed by a little handful of peasants in their Sunday clothes, some of them carrying candles, and most of them chaplets in their

hands, and so they passed up the hill to the cemetery.

But that was not what struck me most. It was when all was over, and the little crowd came dropping in twos and threes down the hill home again, looking cheerful and chatting together, there was one little lad quite alone, about twelve years of age, very ugly, with a shock of red hair, and his cap off, weeping so bitterly, and trying, as he walked desolately, to hide his swollen face by turning it towards the wall—the chief and only mourner that I could see. As I looked at him he gave me one furtive, miserable glance and walked on. A woman told me that he was the brother of the little three-year-old baby that they had just interred, and so I went on my way with tears in my eyes, as if I had been reading a very affecting story.

* * * * *

Since writing the above, I have been away, all by myself, in search of the new and the picturesque, to Pont l'Abbé and Ile Tudy.

Imagine a little isle out in the sea, so small

that you could walk round it in ten minutes, a tiny town upon it, surrounded by a broad low stone rampart to guard it against the encroaching waves, a little church, a big shop, and a little post-office, and you have the spot.

When I reached the shore in a little boat, a signal was hoisted—an old rusty tin can run up to the top of a pole! I spent two or three hours there very pleasantly, and was invited to lunch by the proprietress of the town, who owns the whole of the isle. She seemed only too glad to catch a human being, and poured out a twelvemonths' talk while she fried me some eggs with her own fair hands.

She had a niece, a dog and a cat, with all of whom I made an intimate acquaintance in a surprisingly short space of time.

She told me that there was no spring-water and no well on the island. You must have every drop of fresh water brought in barrels from the mainland; and if you are sick, you must hire someone to wade through the sea, then run eight miles for the doctor. But doctors are not wanted here, I was told, provided you

wear your petticoats up to your knees and wade in the sea, and catch shrimps all day long and all the year round! which they assured me was *bonne pour la santé.*

I was taken to see *la plus belle femme* of the isle, who kindly posed for me while I made a

little sketch of her. I found her very beautiful and brave-looking, with strong, shapely limbs, bare from the knee; a coarse rubber apron, fringed at the bottom, a funny thick roll round the waist, a kerchief open on the shoulders, ditto on the head, and the hair escaping in the wind. I would like to have stayed and painted

her, but time pressed, and, by the sign of the rusty tin can, my boat awaited me, and so I had to go.

Had the weather been finer, I should have gone on to Benodit, which is Dartmouth over again ; but I left that unexplored, and returned to Pont l'Abbé, thence back home. But altogether it was a nice little rest and change.

My love to all your circle, and a Benjamite portion for yourself, from yours, as ever,

H. M. T.

A VIEW FROM OUR WINDOW.

BOULEVARD S. GERMAIN,
PARIS.

ARE you wondering, dear E——, what has become of your voluminous correspondent? I hope you are. We are back again in Paris, and not yet accustomed to the noises; and just now the weather is muddy and chilly, and Paris looks dirty and neglected, like an untidy beauty.

I am in the hands of the doctor, but a *French* one this time, different from my old Italian friend of the horse-hair wig, with the two little tufts of softest auburn at each ear to appear below his hat.

EARLY MORNING.

[To face p. 102.

The first time my present doctor came into the room he had lost his glove, and was so taken up with the misfortune that he could do nothing but toddle about looking for it. He turned his back on poor me, and went poking about after it until we suggested that it might be in the carriage, where, sure enough, it was; and his joy at recovering it made me think, Did he expect a whipping at home if he returned without it? Or perhaps he has a whole press full of odd gloves—how dreadful that would be! Anyhow, he is very kind and solemn, and is giving me *tisane* to drink. It is made of daisies and violets and a whole bouquet of spring field friends; I take sugar and cream with it, and imagine it is five o'clock tea, but it beats tea far and away. I get up every day about 11.30, and sit or creep about the hot studio like a sick blue-bottle of last year, and look out on Paris, and the gilt dome of Les Invalides, and the Eiffel Tower, with its iron bones gathered into a point.

It is sublime to see Eiffel at night blazing

away in spite of the weather, and shifting his great arms of light from east to west, and every now and again slap into the window.

You remember the blow he struck us that evening returning from Suresnes on the boat which made us both start?

I know you will be sorry to hear that there

has been another sweeping reduction of our rents in Ireland, which affects us gravely. What the end of it all will be I am sure I don't know—a crust, a glass of water, and a garret, perhaps!

I reflect on all the great poor people I have read of to give me courage. There was St. Francis, sitting in his rags, and by his own choice, too! And, again, further down, Sam Johnson—he of the dictionary—in his garret in Bolt Court acquiring that dreadful appetite which was to frighten his future entertainers! And then J. J. Rousseau—*but I won't have him!* Goldsmith was poor, too; he had to cut open his bed and sleep in the feathers for want of blankets! And Burns—but Burns starved—*I won't have him either!* You see, I keep to distinguished beggars, though there are plenty of poor ones I know without any distinction except their rags, but they are not romantic enough to stir one's enthusiasm. Anyhow, we mean to be jolly beggars!

We have taken this little *logement* unfurnished, and we are settled for the winter with

all our sketches, music-books, and other books gathered around us.

It is the wee-est of wee places. I wish you could come in and have tea with us. You should be placed in the *very* most comfortable part of the divan, where you could not see the big hole our feet have made in the old carpet opposite the fire; but you would command a view of my pictures and Rose's piano. These are our strong points; so is the little swing-lamp that everyone gets knocked on the head by, particularly if there is a hat on the head —it has a spite against hats! You would see two big coal-boxes of coke: they are an eye-sore we cannot do without—rusty, ill-favoured rascals! The looking-glass is, I think, the culminating point of beauty. It is draped with different tints of faded yellow. It is long and narrow, and makes you look as old as the hills in return for a kind glance. You would have all these before you, and the sloping walls about the window, which break up the stiff lines delightfully. Wealth ought to borrow the idea for its architecture.

I have a splendid view of chimney-pots from my window; and each morning a dapper little cock-sparrow and his partner perform their toilets, just about the same time that I am performing mine, perched on the nearest pink chimney-pot. They come there, I believe, to warm themselves while their little buttons are unloosed and their points untied. There is a niche also quite close to us, where they retire for a time to vent their noisy little opinions.

I have been painting a portrait of a little three-year-old girl who amuses me with her funny remarks. Looking up to the ceiling where our lamp has blackened it, she said:

'Helen, the sky of your room is dirty.'

Then she told me she did not like the conductor of the bus, because he said, 'Allez! petit paquet,' to her when she was getting out. She also begged me to call Rose from the next room.

'Call louder!' she said.

'I cannot.'

'What! have you not life?' she said, opening wide her eyes.

I have also another picture on hand, a single figure, half life. You would like to know the subject? Well—angels and ministers of grace defend us!—it is Mephistopheles!

I had a great wish to paint him. I want also to paint a St. Christopher, but I gave Mr. M—— the precedence. I took my pictures to Carolus Duran's studio the other day, to show him. We dragged them up the stairs to that luxurious ante-room you remember, where the flunkey (who always looks as if he had been having an awful rowing) stands, salver in hand, to receive your card. To me it is always like plucking the string of a shower-bath to meet that man. He looked as black as night when we were announced, and said, 'Comment allez-vous?' as if he was ordering our heads to be chopped off.

Several great artists were there, criticising his pictures and giving the great master a lesson, which he took in the most docile manner, correcting with a piece of white chalk here and there.

It was very interesting seeing them all point-

ing out where they thought he might improve things. I can imagine the old masters in Florence and Venice long ago helping each other in the same brotherly fashion.

Dear old Henner was there. I love that dear old man, although he said to me the other day, when I showed him a sketchy picture of light effects :

'Maintenant, vous êtes dans la voie de ces *imbéciles !*' meaning the Impressionists. You should have heard the growl, and seen the angry look on his great good old face!

He liked my Mephistopheles, but he did not pay me so great a compliment as Carolus did, who said :

'Il y a des grandes qualités dans votre travail.'

Then all the artists gathered round, and gave their opinions.

Imagine Carolus, dressed in purple velvet, lined with white silk, a gold bracelet on his wrist, looking as if he ought to have lived at the Court of Philip IV. or Charles I.

Henner appeared, on the other hand, in a

shabby black suit, with a lucid interval between his waistcoat and his other garments, an old great-coat buttoned at the throat, and the sleeves dangling down behind—and a black silk skull-cap that with difficulty braced round his great bumptious forehead, and old black slippers, instead of the little brilliant shoes and silk stockings of the other.

Nothing but the little red rosette of the Commander of the Légion d'Honneur distinguished his costume from that of the old sweeper of the crossing round the corner.

'Vous êtes dans la voie de ces imbéciles!'

My atelier work is at a standstill for a time, until I am allowed to work. My fellow-students have been most kind, loading me with jellies, soups, port wine, and so much cream that I have been smothered in it, like a strawberry.

My chief friend and caller is unfortunately so irritable that she does me more harm than good by her attentions. I call her 'My dearest foe!' She spits and scratches like a cat if you

venture on any art theory contrary to her own peculiar tenets. I take her up like a hot potato, and drop her again. She is less violent, however, since I have been ill; but she likes being tormented, or she would not come. The last day she was here she two or three times bounced up from her stool, rushed to the win-

dow, and put her nose against the glass to get out; and then, when her nose got a little cool, came back to her seat and went on till the next hitch, and so on. If I were to wish her 'A happy New Year!' she would flounce up and say:

'Anything so *banale!* "A happy New Year!" as if one could be a painter and ever have a happy moment!' etc.

One has to go delicately before her, like Agag, I can tell you. She is not liked in the atelier, but I prefer her to many who are popular—the American lady, for example, with golden hair all tossed under a sealskin cap, who supposes herself to be very clever, and says 'Oh, my!' with a nasal twang to everything you say; or the weak-looking, long, thin drawing-master from Canada, who, I am quite sure, has been sent over here to brush up his art; or an Irishman, who suspects me of being an Orange-woman, or we might be friends. I rather like a high-spirited English girl who one day flung a book at the head of a French girl in our atelier, who, it appears, was telling an improper story. I heard none of it, being a little deaf, but I saw the vivacious action, which rather surprised me. The French seem to have very little sense of propriety, and I think the English girl was right, though she took a rather summary way of showing her displeasure. I often think my brother and sister 'brushes' are a funny set, and I amongst them.

One day we made a pilgrimage to the tomb of Gustave Doré. After some searching we found the modest granite slab beneath which so great an artist lay. Close beside this modest tomb is a magnificent monument, towering to the sky, to the memory of a Paris confectioner! His friends, or perhaps he himself, were determined that *he* at least should not be forgotten if Almighty Money could prevent it. It was like a decoration on one of his own plum cakes!

We also spent a most delightful day at S. Germain; I was in the seventeenth century the whole day. As I sketched the palace I wondered what thoughts occupied the head of James inside those red-brick walls. How he must have thought of the doings of Whitehall, and groped for his beads! and here his little intriguing Court seethed round him; and here, if I mistake not, he stuck to the Pope and threw away a crown.

On the other side is the low-browed, deep-set gateway through which his mortal remains were borne. I fancied I could see the little

Doors of the
Court of St Germain
Sal. 30. Nov.

handful of a mournful procession winding after the black pall, with the semblance of a crown upon it, and maybe the Union Jack (he was a sailor), towards the old church opposite, where his tomb now is, with 'Jacobus Anglorum Rex' in gilt letters and any number of 'Honi soit qui mal y pense' under arms of England filling the alcove where it is, put there by George IV. (I did not know there was that much kind sentiment in him, did you?), and furbished up by our good Queen Victoria.

It will soon be the horrible Royal Academy Exhibition heart-breaking, bile-stirring time again—odious season! which spoils spring and curdles up summer for so many deserving mortals! When shall I lie back in my chair, certain to have a varnishing ticket? Perhaps some day they will be having an exhibition of all my pictures! Am I not modest? *Truth* always is. I am beginning to write nonsense, so I had better stop. There is something in me that never can stick to the serious long—a sort of frivolity, is it, that ought by this time to be well chastened out of me, but which is

not ?—nevertheless, believe in my sincerest affection and accept

'All the loving regards
Of a tried old friend,
And the very best wishes
A heart can send.'

H. M. T.

P.S.—What makes you think I have literary gifts ? You are quite mistaken. I only once scribbled to amuse the silent days of my dearest Molly, but when she vanished out of my life 'Othello's occupation was gone.' You surely do not think that such scribblements as I inflict upon you would interest anyone else. As to writing about the past, well, that is, I am afraid, too tender a subject with me. Imagine exhibiting one's heart with all its sore places on the walls of the Royal Academy, and after all, finding it not hung on the line either ! Oh, *Benedicite !* you do not want that.

If these bits of letters give you any pleasure, I am more than content. However, I appre-

ciate your idea, and send you a mental hug and a kiss for it ; but remember, if I have any gift, it is for painting, and I mean to stick to that to the end of my days.

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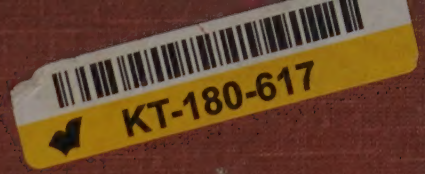
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